

HISTORY  
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UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET  
NAVAL AIR FORCE  
FIGHTER SQUADRON SIXTY TWO  
FPO, NEW YORK, 09501

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From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)

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Ref: (a) OPNAV INST 5750.12A

Encl: (1) Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO Command History

1. In accordance with reference (a) enclosure (1) is hereby submitted.

(b) (6)

By direction

Copy to:  
Director of Naval History  
(OP-09B9)  
Washington Navy Yard  
Washington, D. C. 20390



## FIGHTER SQUADRON SIXTY TWO COMMAND HISTORY

### DESIGNATION AND MISSION

The squadron was designated Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO (VF-62) on 1 July 1955, at which time it received FJ-3 "Fury" aircraft. The squadron's first Commanding Officer was Commander R. W. DREWELON, U. S. NAVY.

Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO is designated a Fighter Interceptor Squadron. As such the squadron's mission is to "Intercept and destroy enemy aircraft." Its secondary missions include attack escort, target patrol, and fighter sweep missions or as the Force Commander may designate. Squadron aircraft are configured for all-weather intercept, they are fully instrumented for instrument and night operation, enabling the squadron to complete its mission under adverse weather and night visibility conditions.

### HISTORY

The squadron's first deployment was made in February 1956 to the Caribbean Area with Air Task Group 202. Six weeks were devoted to gunnery training and Carrier Qualifications aboard the USS RANDOLPH. An intensive gunnery program ashore at Leeward Point Field, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba netted Five E's for gunnery proficiency for VF-62 pilots. Returning to the Randolph all pilots were carrier qualified.

In July 1956, after a concentrated period of preparation, VF-62 deployed again on the RANDOLPH, this time for the Mediterranean and participated in intensive operations. The squadron participated in 13 air defense exercises, flying 1,648 hours and making 1,158 carrier landings. RANDOLPH returned from the Mediterranean in February 1957, at which time a complete training cycle was initiated. From March through June the newly assigned pilots were trained in the FJ-3 and indoctrinated with the squadron's section and division tactics.

In April 1957, Commander Roman KOLAKOWSKI relieved Commander DREWELON as Commanding Officer. In August, the squadron deployed once again to Leeward Point Field for another air-to-air gunnery program. Upon return to CONUS, carrier qualifications were conducted aboard the USS ESSEX (CVA-9), both day and night, and the squadron prepared once again for deployment to the Mediterranean in early 1958.

On 2 February 1958, VF-62 departed in ESSEX for the Mediterranean and six months of carrier operations. During the deployment the squadron flew 3,006 hours and made 1,701 carrier landings. The Lebanon Crisis occurred in mid-July, and VF-62 was on hand with four "Furies" overhead during the Marine Landing on the 14th. Flight operations were of necessity stepped up, and during the period from 15 July to 19 August (21 days) the squadron flew 839 sorties and 1,067 hours--an average of 30 sorties for 50.5 hours per day.

During the intensive operations during the Lebanon Crisis, VF-62 pilots made the 85,000th and 86,000th landings aboard USS ESSEX. Captain (b) (6) USAF, an Air Force Exchange Pilot, made the 85,000th landing; LT (b) (6) USN made the 86,000th landing.



## VF-62 Command History (Cont'd)

Following the Lebanon crisis, the ESSEX was diverted to the Pacific Fleet via the Suez Canal to provide additional striking power should it be needed at trouble-ridden Formosa. VF-62 was thus given the opportunity to operate in the Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean skies in a single deployment. In an eight month period, the squadron visited such ports as:

Genoa, Italy	Athens, Greece	Columbo, Ceylon
Cannes, France	Port Said, Egypt	Capetown, S. Africa
Barcelona, Spain	Singapore, B. C. I.	Rio de Janerio, Brazil

Upon the squadron's return to Cecil Field, Florida, on 21 November 1958, Commander James F. STONE, USN, relieved Commander KOLAKOWSKI as Commanding Officer. Arriving with Commander STONE was a full complement of replacement pilots. After a period of familiarization and training, the squadron once again prepared for deployment. Notably, all pilots were qualified in Broadcast Control Intercept COPEX, with 11 pilots netting E's.

In April 1959, the squadron re-qualified aboard the USS RANDOLPH, then boarding the ESSEX for operations in preparation for Mediterranean deployment in mid-1959. While participating in Operation INTEX 1-59, LT James C. STEELE, USN, was killed in a flight deck crash upon returning from an early morning CAP flight. As a result of the crash and the ensuing fire, seven planes were badly damaged or destroyed. The fire was extinguished swiftly, but not before two flight deck personnel from VA-176 were fatally burned.

During June 1959, VF-62 concentrated on its air-to-air gunnery proficiency and conducted night carrier qualifications aboard ESSEX. All 14 pilots were qualified. Operations were conducted ashore both at Mayport, Florida and Oceana, Virginia. The squadron participated in a NATO exercise in July, following with a COMPEX of 20,000 and 30,00 gunnery.

On 7 August, ESSEX sailed from Mayport for the Mediterranean once more, relieving the USS INTREPID on 18 August at Gibraltar. In September, LT (b) (6) USN, made the 92,000th landing on the E. L. S., just two days after he had successfully ditched an FJ-3M "Fury" at sea following an engine failure in the landing pattern. From 18 September to 24 September ESSEX participated in NATO exercise CRESCENT MACE, an intensive air and sea operation composed of all NATO countries. On 1 October LT (b) (6) again successfully ditched at sea following an arrested landing on which the arresting wire broke. Having had a helicopter hoist a month earlier, this time he was rescued by the Destroyer Plane Guard USS D. H. FOX.

In December 1959, the ESSEX was designated an escort ship for President Eisenhower and his entourage, travelling from Athens, Greece to Toulon, France via Tunisia, Tunis. The evolution was named Operation MONSOON. In order to make room for additional helicopters and members of the press, part of the air group flew to Naval Station, Rota, Spain for the duration of MONSOON. The remainder of the group, including five VF-62 "Furies", participated in an air show for the President, who was embarked in the USS DES MOINES. Upon completion of Operation MONSOON and re-assembly of the Air Group, the ESSEX entered port at Naples, Italy for Christmas.



VF-62 Command History (Cont'd)

After leaving Naples in January 1962, the squadron engaged in an intensive month of carrier operations, accumulating over 455 hours. During this month, most of VF-62's pilots became ESSEX Centurions. By early February all pilots became Centurions. On 13 February the ESSEX was relieved by USS F. D. ROOSEVELT (CVA-42), and VF-62 returned to home port at Cecil Field.

On 1 March 1960, VF-62 received its first F8U-1 "Crusader", and became the last Fighter Squadron to deploy with the FJ "Fury". With the arrival of the new type aircraft, only four pilots remained with Fighter Squadron 62. Ten recently trained F-8U pilots were received from Replacement Air Group Training at VF-174, and the transition was begun. Commander B.L. GARBOW, USN, also a recent graduate of F8-U training at VF-174, relieved Commander STONE as Commanding Officer.

On 1 June 1960, only three short months after receipt of its first F-8U, VF-62 deployed in USS SHANGRI-LA (CVA-38) for the Caribbean. In addition, to a concentrated "Shake-down" of the ship, VF-62 conducted a highly successful gunnery program at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Day and night carrier qualifications were completed for all pilots. The SHANGRI-LA returned to Mayport on 18 July and the squadron returned to Cecil Field, where COMPLEXES in gunnery and intercepts were completed.

On 6 September 1960, VF-62 deployed again in SHANGRI-LA and sailed for the North Atlantic in order to participate in the major NATO Exercises "SWORD THRUST". During these exercises, operations were conducted in the Norwegian Sea and North Atlantic, in conjunction with other NATO Exercises. The only VF-62 mishap was a faulty catapult shot on which Commander J.E. DAVIS, USN, Executive officer, was uninjured when his F-8U veered off the starboard side of the bow, broke up and sank. He was recovered by helicopter. The squadron flew 73 sorties for 111 flight hours during the 15 days of the exercise. At the completion of SWORD THRUST, the SHANGRI-LA decked in Southampton, England for ten days, and on 10 October sailed for Mayport, where the squadron once again off-loaded and returned to Cecil Field for training and COMPLEX refreshers.

On 16 November 1960, the "Seagoing Boomerangs" were again underway in SHANGRI-LA for two weeks in the Caribbean and refresher CARQUILS. The squadron returned to Cecil Field on 28 November, where normal training was resumed and Christmas was spent at home.

On 1 February, VF-62 once again loaded aboard USS SHANGRI-LA and embarked for Rota, Spain. Three months of extensive gunnery and tactics training were accomplished at Rota, and SHANGRI-LA was recalled from the Mediterranean in early May, and Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO returned to Cecil Field on 16 May. On 26 May, a formal squadron inspection was held, at which Commander Joe P. MOORER, USN, relieved Commander GARBOW as Commanding Officer.



## VF-62 COMMAND HISTORY (CONT'D)

Just two weeks after return from the Mediterranean, the "Boomerangs" were ordered to load aboard SHANGRI-LA on 1 June for emergency deployment to the Dominican Republic, where a political brush fire was blazing. After two weeks of anxiety and intensive operations, the squadron proceeded on SHANGRI-LA to the Island of Vieques to participate in full-scale marine landing exercises. On 20 June, the squadron returned to Cecil Field, where intercept training and COMPEXES were resumed.

Between 18 and 28 July, day and night refresher carrier qualifications were conducted off the Florida coast aboard USS SHANGRI-LA. This operation was repeated during the period of 21 to 27 August.

September and October of 1961 were spent in concentrated training in radar and Sidewinder intercept techniques, the squadron taking advantage of an uninterrupted two month tour on the beach.

On 1 November the entire squadron deployed to Leeward Point Field, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a familiar site by now to the "Seagoing Boomerangs". Three weeks of intensive air-to-air gunnery were accomplished, as well as the setting of a flight time record. A total of 809 hours were flown during the month of November an all-time high for NAVAIRLANT jet fighter squadrons for one calendar month.

With political tension mounting in Latin America, Christmas leave period was curtailed at Cecil Field, as the squadron maintained a combat ready status 24 hours a day into the New Year.

During the month of January, day and night refresher carrier qualifications were conducted off the Florida coast aboard USS F.D. ROOSEVELT (CVA 42). All pilots were day and night qualified.

On 8 February 1962, Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO was temporarily assigned to carrier Air Group ONE for the "Shakedown" cruise of the World's largest ship and first nuclear aircraft carrier, USS ENTERPRISE (CVAN-65). A group of 5 VF-62 pilots had already operated on the deck of ENTERPRISE in mid-January, a short cruise on which Commander G. C. TALLY, USN, Commander Carrier Air Group ONE, made the first jet landing on the Enterprise in a VF-62 aircraft.

Operating out of Guantanamo Bay, ENTERPRISE received the highest mark ever attained by a Navy ship while under shakedown. VF-62 was no less impressive, as it flew 614.6 hours during the month of March alone, and accounted for 548 of the 2908 landings amassed on the nuclear carrier.

In early April, following the highly successful Caribbean cruise, VF-62 and ENTERPRISE proceeded to waters off Norfolk, Virginia. Air Group ONE in the ENTERPRISE and Air Group EIGHT in the USS FORRESTAL performed a joint air show and Fire Power Demonstration for President John F. KENNEDY and members of Congress. Five of VF-62's pilots (CDR (b)(6), LCDR (b)(6), LT (b)(6), AND LT (b)(6)) had the honor of shaking hands with the President following the giant demonstration. On 14 April 1962, the "Boomerangs" returned to



Florida once more, to concentrate on the completion of training and COMPEXES for the last weeks of the Fiscal Year -- another successful year for the squadron, with an impressive safety record and more operational experience behind them, looking forward to another perhaps more successful year.

Commander John G. BROZO relieved Commander J. P. MOORER as Commanding Officer on 15 June 1962. Commander BROZO had previously served as the "Boomerang" Executive Officer.

On the fourteenth of September Commander John W. BROWN assumed command of Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO. Commander BROZO had suffered a back injury and was unable to continue operational flying. 1962

In late October, during the initial build-up for the Cuban crisis, Fighting SIXTY TWO temporarily joined the U.S. AIR FORCE. Under the Tactical Air Command all activities were coordinated through CVG-10. The primary mission during this period was strike and fighter escort for attack aircraft.

The "Boomerangs" embarked aboard the USS LEXINGTON (CVS 16) as part of CVG 3 in November. On the 26th of November, Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO was reassigned to their parent Air Group, CVG 10 and continued operations off the Florida coast, aboard the USS LEXINGTON until the 14th of December, when the entire air group returned to NAS Cecil Field.

As Christmas approached, the "Boomerangs" deployed five F8B's to NAS Key West to stand the Fighter alert duty under COMKEYWESTFORCES from 19 December 1962 to January 1963. Christmas was highlighted for the Key West detachment by the arrival of Santa Claus from NAS Cecil Field in his "Crusader". 1963

Again between the 29th of January and the 20th of March 1963, Fighting SIXTY TWO deployed four aircraft to NAS Leeward Point, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to assume fighter alert duty under COMNABASE, Guantanamo Bay.

The majority of the squadron remained at NAS Cecil Field during January, February, and March. Training centered around Sidewinder intercepts against Delmar tow targets and air-to-air gunnery. The Operational Readiness Inspection was successfully completed during the last week of March.

Fighting SIXTY TWO again embarked aboard the USS SHANGRI-LA (CVA-38) for a "shakedown" cruise in April and May of 1963. Deploying four Crusaders to NAS McCalla, Guantanamo Bay, the "Boomerangs" accomplished another first for the fleet by flying their four alert F-8B's from a 4,300 foot airstrip. Utilizing MOREST gear, over 150 successful field arrestments were logged while flying CAP missions defending Guantanamo. The squadron participated in the ship's ORI and successfully completed its own ORI prior to returning to the states. A "Boomerang" pilot logged the 50,000 landing aboard the "SHANG" since her recommissioning. Even with the intensive air operations occurring during the ORI, the "cake ceremony" was nevertheless observed on the flight deck. Midway through the cruise, Kingston, Jamaica proved to be a much more entertaining liberty port than the usual Gitmo routine.



VF-62 Command History (Cont'd)

In May 1963, LTJG (b)(6) successfully ejected after a ramp strike at night. His rescue became famous when he was found hanging from the chute which had caught the deck edge protrusion by the # 2 elevator. He did not even get his feet wet.

June and July of 1963 were "esprit de corps" inspiring months for the "Boomerangs" as they transitioned from F-8E's to factory-new F-8E's. Concentrating on radar techniques, the squadron quickly became a proficient all-weather fighter outfit. In August, the pilots logged day and night refresher landings aboard the USS SHANGRI-LA. Taking advantage of their new attack capability, the "Boomerangs" successfully experimented with the attack mission concept. 1963

September was spent in pre-Mediterranean cruise exercises aboard SHANGRI-LA operating off the Florida coast. Commander J. T. SIMONS, Jr. then assumed command of FIGHTER SQUADRON SIXTY-TWO relieving Commander J. W. BROWN, on the 11th of September.

Fighting SIXTY TWO, flying the F-8E Crusader based aboard the only remaining Essex class attack carrier on the Atlantic coast, departed for a seven month Mediterranean cruise 1 October 1963. The "SHANG'S" motto "WE CAN HACK IT" has been firmly upheld by the "Seagoing Boomerangs." Just prior to entering the Med., LCDR H. L. TERRY, Executive Officer, ejected at night after his aircraft had control failure in the groove and hook skipped #3 and #4 wires. With 40-45 knots of wind, the XO's survival was due to his outstanding alertness and physical conditioning.

The squadron has enjoyed a very successful winter cruise logging over two thousand hours of flight time and over one thousand arrested landings. The squadron participated in numerous fleet exercises, unilateral, bilateral and joint NATO activities. The squadron's F-8E's have proven to be a match for any aircraft engaged in these exercises. Since this squadron was the first to be outfitted with the Approach Power Compensator we were quite anxious to observe the results achieved on the extended deployment. Despite supply problems at the outset of the cruise, the Approach Power Compensator, has proven itself to be a very valuable aid to F-8 carrier operations. The device, when used, prevents the decelerating-settle-at-the-ramp approach which has been a thorn in the side of F-8 carrier operations for several years.

The squadron has also utilized the new F-8 attack capability by being the first Crusader squadron to drop conventional practice bombs. Bombing sorties are now scheduled as a regular part of the squadron's training program.

At the conclusion of a very successful COMPEX program in June 1964, during which over six hundred hours of flight time were logged, the squadron again made ready for sea. Deployed aboard SHANGRI-LA, VF-62 took part in Operation SAIL, part of the World's Fair festivities at New York. On return to Mayport, Florida, the SHANGRI-LA hosted Midshipmen from Annapolis. Squadron aircraft demonstrated the versatility of the F-8E by making sidewinder, strafe and rocket attacks in full view of the force. 1964



## VF 62 Command History (Cont'd)

In mid-August, Commander P.R. CRAVEN, USN, relieved Commander J.T. SIMONS, JR., as Commanding Officer. After a very brief stay on the beach, the squadron again deployed. This time the Boomerangs found their seagoing home on the USS INDEPENDENCE (CVA 62). The "Big I" was taking part in a joint NATO exercise in the North Atlantic, and Fighting SIXTY TWO was taken along to keep the Soviet Reconnaissance aircraft under observation if they attempted to approach the force. This mission proved very fruitful and the "Boomerangs" were on hand to greet more than twenty-five of the intruders. The "Big I" was then diverted to the Mediterranean for a month emergency relief of the USS F.D. ROOSEVELT. During this period, LTJG (b) (6) successfully ejected after his Crusader flamed-out in the groove and hook skipped #3 and #4 wires.

After returning in November 1964, the squadron became immediately embroiled in another COMPLEX period. At the completion of this requirement the squadron celebrated Christmas at home for the first time in three years. 1964

The new year came in with a Bang and the "Boomerangs" were back on the home-away-from-home, "THE GOOD OLE SHANG".

As a result of the VF 62 Operational achievements during the NATO exercise "TEAMWORK" (AUG-SEP 64), CDR (b) (6) was chosen as Com 2nd Fleet's nominee for the STEPHAN DECATUR Award for outstanding operational competence. The squadron also received a commendation from the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic.

After ADMIT inspection in January, the Boomers went "Seaward" once again (February 15th). On the first half of March, SHANGRI LA passed through the Straits of Gibraltar for a seven month Mediterranean cruise. While on this cruise the squadron sent a three plane detachment to the USS SARATOGA (CVA 60) for a two month period. The "SHANG" and Air Wing 10 participated in many unilateral, bilateral and joint NATO exercises while in the MED. We were also one of the members involved in a collision at sea. The squadron returned to the states on the 20th of September with a new Skipper, CDR H.L. TERRY, who had been the "Boomerangs" previous Operations Officer and Executive Officer. After arriving at Cecil Field, the squadron enjoyed a well earned, maximum leave period. 1965

During our stand-down period in October, we participated in a fire-power demonstration with the USS RANDOLPH (CVS 15) off the Virginia coast, again proving the mettle of our outstanding pilots and ground crews.

On the 29th of October 1965, Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO was presented the COMNAVFLANT Battle Readiness Excellence Plaque by RADM H.H. CALDWELL, COMFAIRJAX. This presentation, at NAS Cecil Field, gave testimony to many months of hard work and the high "Esprit de Corps" possessed by the officers and men of the "Seagoing Boomerangs".

In December the squadron was chosen by CINCLANTFLT to replace the Marine squadron assigned alert duty at Key West, Florida over the holidays (15 Dec-15 Jan). Sata flew an F8 to our men as they carried out this undesirable task in typical Boomerang Fashion.



Following the Maintenance change came the annual Administrative/  
Material inspection. Conducted on the 21st of April, Fighter Squadron  
SIXTY TWO continued to show itself as an outstanding Fighter Squadron. 1966

Completing the inspection, the squadron continued its shore based  
training in air-to-ground weapons delivery, low level navigation, tactics,  
and banner gunnery. During this period VF-62 once again became a  
member of an Air Wing. On 1 May 1966, the squadron became a member of  
Attack Carrier Air Wing EIGHT.

In June the scene shifted from NAS Cecil Field to the USS SHANGRI-LA  
where VF-62 deployed for a training cruise off the coast of Cuba. Flying  
both from SHANGRI LA and Leeward Point, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the  
squadron continued its training operations.

During this training cruise, CDR William F. RAU, USN, relieved  
CDR Harold L. TERRY, USN, as Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron  
SIXTY TWO. The change of command ceremonies took place at Leeward  
Point on 9 July 1966.

After returning to NAS Cecil Field on 28 July 1966 the "BOOMERS"  
began transitioning from F8E aircraft to their present F8D model. Com-  
pleting the transition, VF-62 once again boarded SHANGRI LA for a short  
two week training period off the coast of Florida.

Completing this short cruise the squadron returned to Cecil and  
began preparing for an eight month Mediterranean cruise. Departing  
the states on 29 September, SHANGRI LA operated off Florida before  
transiting the Atlantic.

After crossing the Atlantic, the ship conducted carrier refresher  
landings off the coast of Spain. At this time LTJG (b) (6)  
USNR recorded the 78,000 landing aboard the SHANGRI LA.

In-chopping with the U. S. Sixth Fleet, the SHANGRI LA commenced  
operations within the Mediterranean Sea, conducting unilateral and  
bilateral exercises with NATO forces in the area; Phiblex with the  
Marines, Lafayette with the French and Dawn Clear with the Italians  
to name a few.

While conducting a joint exercise with the USS AMERICA, VF-62 had  
the misfortune of a mid-air collision. Both pilots, LCDR (b) (6)  
USN, and LTJG (b) (6), USNR, ejected safely and were returned to  
SHANGRI LA amidst a happily waiting crew of squadron members.

Along with the exercises were the delightful port periods. Some  
of the ports called at were Naples, Italy; the Isle of Malta; Istanbul,  
Turkey; Athens, Greece; Taranto, Italy; Toulon, France; Marseilles,  
France; Palma, Mallorca; Naples again; Palermo, Sicily; and Barcelona,  
Spain.

Now that the cruise has almost come to a successful conclusion the  
members of the "SEAGOING BOOMERANGS" are looking forward to home and  
family.



After returning to Cecil Field on 20 May 1967 the "Boomers" began transitioning from F8C model. A total of eight of the F8C aircraft were modified with a "hard point" wing, enabling the aircraft to carry conventional wing stores.

On 15 July 1967 a detachment from Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO left for NAS Key West and Hot Pad Alert duty for a period of two months.

On 24 July 1967 CDR Donald L. WHITMAN, USN relieved CD. William F. RAY, USN as Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO. The change of command ceremonies were held at NAS Cecil Field.

On 4 August 1967, the squadron moved aboard the USS SHANGRI LA for approximately one month of intensive training off the coast of Cuba.

Upon return to COMUS on 2 September, the squadron continued its rigorous training schedule at Cecil Field. On 15 September the Key West detachment returned to Cecil Field. Boarding the USS SHANGRI LA on 25 September the squadron conducted two weeks refresher training off the coast of Florida. During this at sea period, USS SHANGRI LA and Attack Carrier Air Wing JAWF with Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO hosted the American Ordnance Association for a Fire Power Demonstration. The Seagoing Boomers demonstrated the capabilities of the F8 Crusader by firing ZUNI rockets, Sidewinder missiles and 20 millimeter cannon.

Following this latest at sea training, the squadron returned to Cecil Field on 16 October, where it continued to prepare its new aircraft for the upcoming Mediterranean Deployment.

On 24 October the Seagoing Boomers embarked aboard the USS SHANGRI LA for two weeks of refresher training just prior to departure for the Mediterranean area on 15 November 1967.

In-chopping with the U.S. Sixth Fleet on 22 November 1967, the USS SHANGRI LA commenced operating within the Mediterranean Sea. From 6-10 December the squadron participated in PHIRLEX 10-67 providing close air support in coordination with the Marine Amphibious Landing Forces.

The "Boomers" of Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO have participated in various major Sixth Fleet/NATO exercises and visited the ports of Valletta, Malta; Naples, Italy; Palma, Spain; Souda Bay, Crete; Athens, Greece; Palermo, Sicily; Barcelona, Spain; La Spezia, Italy and Genoa, Italy.

On June 25 Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO played a major role in the celebration of the Sixth Fleet's Twentieth Anniversary. Some thirty ships and more than twice as many aircraft from USS SHANGRI LA and USS INDEPENDENCE participated in this exceptionally well executed program. Of the aircraft flown from the deck of USS SHANGRI LA during the air-power demonstration, almost one quarter wore the yellow tail symbol of the Seagoing Boomers.



During this Mediterranean Deployment the "Boomers" accumulated 2462.0 hours, advanced 40 men in rate and had a very safe cruise without the loss of any personnel or aircraft.

The squadron returned to its home base at Cecil Field, Florida on 4 August 1968.

On 12 August 1968 CDR Samuel W. HUBBARD, Jr., USN relieved CDR Donald L. WHITMAN, USN as Commanding Officer, of Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO. The change of command ceremonies were held at NAS Cecil Field, Florida.



## VF-62 COMMAND HISTORY (CONT'D)

During the first several weeks of October 1968, Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO conducted extensive training exercises prior to embarkation onboard USS SHANGRI LA for a one month deployment to the Caribbean. These exercises included competitive air to ground bombing missions and field carrier landing practice at nearby Mayport.

The Sea-going Boomerangs joined the SHANGRI-LA earlier than anyone expected. As hurricane Hazel approached the Florida coast, VF62, along with other squadrons of CVW8, received an immediate emergency recall on the evening of 17 October. By early the next morning, the air wing and their supporting supplies were on board CVA 38 and departed for Guantanamo Bay, where the aircraft were to follow several days later.

The squadron's pilots conducted a week of air to air gunnery exercises off the southern coast of Cuba prior to beginning refresher carrier landings aboard the SHANGRI-LA. For the next three weeks, the squadron flew exclusively from the carrier, the last ten days of which were spent off the Jacksonville coast.

Returning to Cecil Field on November 17, Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO participated in routine training missions and prepared to depart all squadron spaces. CVW8 officially attached to CVA38 in early December and bade farewell to NAS Cecil until the following.

On December 3rd, the ship was underway from Mayport and steamed for an operating area off the northern coast of Puerto Rico. For the next two weeks, the Boomers averaged two flights a day per pilot, as they prepared for the forthcoming Operational Readiness Inspection. The ORI went smoothly for Fighting SIXTY TWO; relentless practice and a high experience level paid off, as the squadron compiled an overall grade of excellent.

Following the successful ORI, SHANGRI LA steamed home to Mayport, arriving there on December 21st. For the next fifteen days, the crew enjoyed a well earned Christmas Holiday.

Fighter Squadron SIXTY TWO left Mayport on the seventh of January, 1969 based onboard the USS SHANGRI LA (CVA38) and headed for a seven month Mediterranean cruise. The squadron had twelve pilots assigned and ten F8H's. Mediterranean air operations were commenced on 17 January 1969.

On 20 January 1969 LTJG J. T. SKINNER was killed when his aircraft left the flight deck after a day arrestment. LTJG SKINNER was VF-62's second fatality since the squadron was established in 1955.

The ship was anchored in Barcelona, Spain from the fourth to the tenth of February and in Cannes, France from the eighteenth to the



VF-62 COMBAT HISTORY (CONF'D)

twenty-seventh. During the eight days between Barcelona and Cannes, the squadron participated in Operation Poop Deck, operating with the Spaniards.

National Week was the next major fleet exercise for Fighting 62. Upon completion of National Week, the SHANGRI LA headed for Naples, to stay there from the eight to the seventeenth of March. Two days before the ship arrived in Naples, a six plane BOOMER detachment departed for Wheelus Air Force Base, Tripoli, for a week of air-to-air gunnery. CDR (b) (6) experienced the SHANGRI LA's 100,000 cat shot since recommissioning on departing to Wheelus. The natives proved friendly and much good gunnery was accomplished, improving the squadron's combat readiness.

Soon after departing Naples, Fighting SIXTY TWO participated in a brief Quickdraw exercise. Following the Quickdraw, a detachment was sent to operate from NAF Sigonella, Sicily while the SHANGRI LA held carrier qualifications. Many hours of CAP and service flights were flown from Sigonella in very few days.

Back on board once again the BOOMERS ended the month in Athens, being in port from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-ninth.

Increased Russian activity in the Mediterranean placed increased CAP demands on Fighting SIXTY TWO as can be seen by the three month total of 985 flight hours and 493 traps.



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The first week of April found VF-62 based aboard the USS SHANGRI LA, at anchor in Valletta, Malta. Unfortunately the weather was bad and liberty was good only for those stuck ashore.

Malta was left behind on the 10th of April. During the next six days we conducted many short exercises, the best of which was our abbreviated gunnery detachment. Only two F-8's were based ashore at Sigonella, one to tow and one to escort, while the shooters came in from regular cycle operations off the carrier.

The SHANGRI LA anchored in Souda Bay, Crete for three days, 16 to 18 April. This broke up a long (10 April to 2 May) at sea period, and produced an epic All Hands party.

Operation Dawn Patrol was the longest exercise of the deployment, running from the 20th to the 30th of April. We operated with/against the Turks, Greeks, and Italians, ranging from Eastern to Western Mediterranean.

The SHANGRI LA's next port of call was brief -- 2 to 7 May spent in Naples. After leaving Naples, the first day at sea was spent showing off the power of an attack carrier to the members of the Italian War College. The squadron then participated in National Week II off the coast of Sardinia.

May 11th to 19th found the squadron enjoying Barcelona, everyone's favorite liberty port. Once at sea again, we flew with the ever-successful Blue Forces in National Week III from the 22nd to the 24th of May. The end of the month found the SHANGRI LA anchored again off of Valletta, Malta for another week (25 May - 1 June).

The next major operation was Olympic Express for the period 2-9 June. It involved several NATO countries and brought us to the far northern reaches of the Aegean. Although the flying was not particularly exciting for VF-62, everyone had the chance to appreciate the beauty there in the Greek Isles.

On the 9th of June SHANGRI LA had its dependents' Cruise for the deployment, picking up family and friends at Athens, Greece. Following the Air Show on the 9th, the squadron spent an especially pleasant in port period at Athens, staying until the 16th of June. The majority of the squadron's business was conducted at the daily AOM at Astir Beach.

After leaving Athens the squadron held another Mini-Gun Detachment, flying the banners out of Sigonella as before.

The end of the quarter found the SHANGRI LA anchored at Cannes, France. We arrived there on the 26th of June for our last liberty port of the cruise. Cannes was an experience for all. The squadron's combat readiness was reduced during the long port period.

Many milestones were reached during this quarter. Boomer One, GDR Sam (b) (6) flew his 1000th F-8 hour. LT (b) (6) made his 400th SHANGRI LA arrested landing. LCDR (b) (6) made his 300th SHANG trap and left the squadron with a total of 699 carrier arrestments. Lieutenants (b) (6)



and (b) (6) both made triple SHANGRI LA Centurian.

The quarter was also marked by Ready Room One becoming the show place of CAG-8. We played host to the CNO, Greek Admirals, Italian Generals, Turkish Pilots, Distinguished Members of the German Parliament, and many others. As always, we put on a good show.